This number contains two of the $2,600 Prize Stories.

The Black Cat

5 CENTS

August 1897.

Her Bare Foot
$200 Prize Story
William C. Hudson

Miss Phoebe and Mr. Lorton
Charles Sloan Reid

A No Quorum Night
L. A. Leonard

Tim Halliday's Baby
Erskine M. Hamilton

Ezra Collingford's Figure 4 Trap
$100 Prize Story
William Maynadier Browne

Copyright, 1897, by The Shortstory Publishing Co.

THE SHORTSTORY PUBLISHING CO., 144 HIGH ST. BOSTON, MASS.

№ 23 Copyright, 1897, by The Shortstory Publishing Co.

Choice materials, highly perfected processes and tireless effort have made

Lundborg's Perfumes

what they are.

For the Hair.

Absolute Cure for Dandruff. Soothes all Irritation of the Scalp. The only preparation that makes the hair grow by nourishing the roots. Price, 50c. and $1.00 per bottle.

JOSEPH BURNETT CO.,
36 India Street, Boston, Mass.

Send your address for our pamphlet on the Hair, its care and management.

BATHING is always pleasant; with PEARS' SOAP it is a luxury. You never can find another toilet soap that so closely comes up to the ideal of perfection, and so long as fair, white hands, a bright, clear complexion and a soft, healthful skin continue to add to beauty and attractiveness so long will

Pears' Soap

continue to hold its place in the good opinion of women who wish to be beautiful and attractive. Its purity is such that it may be used on the tenderest and most sensitive skin, even that of a new-born babe.

Annual Sales Over 6,000,000 Boxes!

BEECHAM'S PILLS

For Bilious and Nervous disorders such as Wind and Pain in the Stomach, Sick Headache, Giddiness, Fulness and Swelling after meals, Dizziness and Drowsiness, Flushings of Heat, Loss of Appetite, Costiveness, Blotches on the Skin, etc. **The First Dose will give Relief in Twenty Minutes.** Every sufferer **will acknowledge them to be**

A Wonderful Medicine!

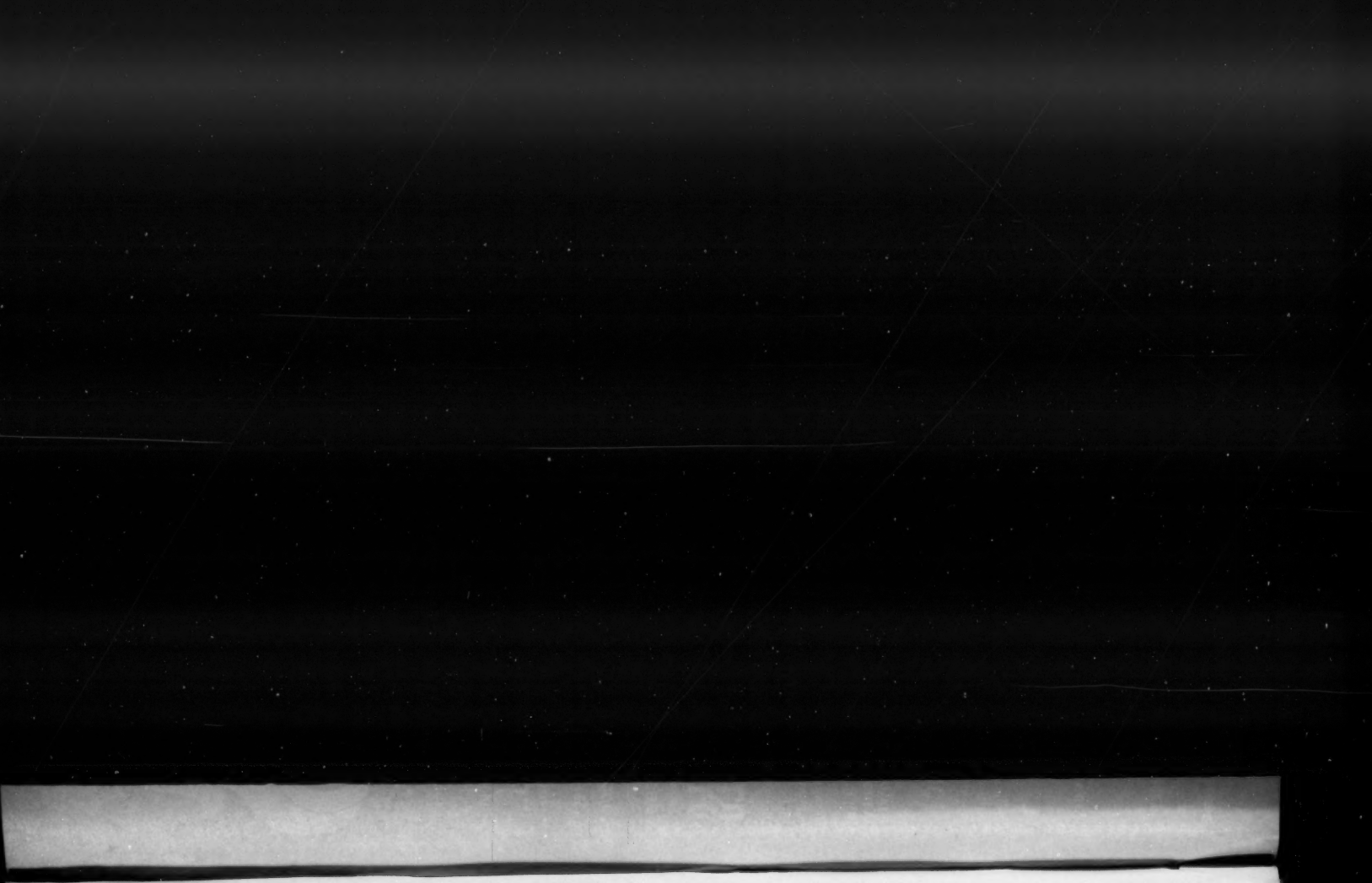
They quickly restore females to complete health, because they promptly remove obstructions or irregularities of the system.

For a
Weak Stomach,
Impaired Digestion,
Disordered Liver,
they act like magic and are positively

Without a Rival!

25 cts. at Drug Stores. Or postpaid of B.F. ALLEN CO., 365 Canal St., New York.

Book Free Upon Application.



all
ara-
ning
ttle.

ss..

on

S

ch
ick
ell-
ess,
os-
he
ty
vi-

!

ete
ob-

er,

.F.
t.

The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

Copyright, 1897, by The Shortstory Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

No. 23. AUGUST, 1897. 5 cents a copy. 50 cents a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

IMPORTANT.— The entire contents of this magazine are covered by copyright and publishers everywhere are cautioned against reproducing any of the stories, either wholly or in part.

Her Bare Foot.*

BY WILLIAM C. HUDSON.

"REMEMBER! Her bare foot!"

These words were whispered into my ear one night last winter as, at the close of a performance, I was pressing through the lobby of the Empire Theater, in New York.

Startled, I impulsively turned to the left, from which side they seemed to come. A tall, elderly gentleman was at my shoulder, but he was talking animatedly to the lady on his arm. He could not have been the whisperer.

Behind me was a bevy of young girls, chattering like magpies, under the convoy of a sedate matron. It could not have been either of these.

On my immediate right, an ex-mayor of the city and a celebrated lawyer discussed the play. Certainly it was neither of these.

I was puzzled and annoyed. In the tone of the whisper there was warning, and another quality — what? That I could not determine, yet it incited me to quarrel with somebody; but on looking about, I could find no eligible person to quarrel with.

From the theater I went for my midnight chop and mug of

*This story received the fourth prize, of $200, in THE BLACK CAT prize competition, which closed March 31, 1897.

ale. The mysterious incident lingered with me. I could not dismiss it. Whose bare foot? What about it? Why should I remember it? Answers were not forthcoming. Within my knowledge was nothing to which the whispered words could have relation. Vexed with myself that I should give so much heed to the incident and permit it to spoil the enjoyment of my meal, I left the chop house in a temper with myself. Before doing so, I transferred my latch-key from a pocket of my trousers to one in my top coat, for the night was cold, and I protected myself against delay and the opening of my coat at the street door.

During my walk home it seemed to me that everybody that passed, even the cab horses, whispered those irritating words to me. I am quite certain that at Thirty-third Street, Horace Greeley bent down from his granite perch to do so, and I know I detected in his stony eyes a leer — a malicious leer.

When, on reaching my street door, I put my hand into my pocket for the latch-key, I felt a slip of paper. I took it out with the key. Under the dimly burning hall light I examined it; on it was written in a hand with which I was not familiar:—

"Remember! Her bare foot! Be prepared!"

I was shocked. Hurrying to my room, I studied the slip.

The writing was that of a man of education and of one accustomed to the use of the pen — this the slip indicated and nothing more, except that it proved that the whisper in the theater lobby was not a trick of the imagination, as I had been trying to persuade myself.

Mystified, I went to bed, but to an uneasy and dream-haunted sleep, in which bare feet of all sizes and shapes floated in the air, twinkled their pink toes, or winked, or grinned, or leered at me, while one persistent foot planted itself on my chest to inform me that it had knowledge of all my peccadillos.

The morning found me nervous and unrefreshed. However, had it not been for the indubitable evidence of the slip of paper lying on my table, I think I might have dismissed the incident as an effect of disordered imagination. But there it was to tell its tale.

That morning I had an appointment with Chester Williams, a kindred soul in a hobby of mine,— amateur photography, — and

who, beginning as an amateur and ending as an adept, had opened a suite of rooms, which he called a "studio," having a high regard for his art. Here I was accustomed to spend much time in experiment, to his profit and my pleasure.

As I entered the studio, Williams handed me a letter.

"Found it on the floor," he said briefly.

Taking the letter, I glanced at the address and started visibly. I was familiar with the writing now, at least. There was no doubt about the address: —

"Charles Haswell, Esq., care of Mr. Chester Williams, Present."

I tore off the envelope; the same kind of a slip of paper as I had found in my pocket. On it was written: —

"Remember! Her bare foot! Be prepared! Do not leave town."

I was dumfounded. None of my correspondents and few of my friends knew of my visits to Williams's studio. Who was this mysterious person who was whispering warnings and writing imploring memoranda to me to remember somebody's bare foot?

I handed the slip to Williams.

"What does it mean?" he asked.

"That's what I want to know," I replied.

I told him the story of the previous evening. Chester is a cheerful and optimistic youth.

"Poh!" he said, with a wave of the hand dismissing the whole matter. "Some of your friends are constructing an elaborate joke."

Then he drove the matter from my mind by a proposition well according with my fancy. He had received an extensive order for a series of views in another State, and he proposed that in his absence, a fortnight or more, I should conduct his studio.

"I doubt if you will have much to do," he said. "The damsel who wants to be 'took beautiful' is not much in evidence here. If she does put in an appearance, you will have a chance to spoil some plates and exploit your theories on the art of posing."

I yielded without urging, and as we parted at evening he said: —

"I don't know that I have anything to say, except to advise you to sit on that boy of mine every ten minutes,— for your own

sake, you know, — and to beware of the fascinations of the young 'saleslady' who has dubbed herself the 'cashier' of the establishment."

On my way home I stopped at the tobacconist's where I buy my cigars.

"A boy left this for you, Mr. Haswell," said the man of tobacco, handing me a letter.

The same writing — the same slip of paper.

"Remember! Her bare foot! Postponed! Await further notice."

By this time surprise had given way to anger. I tore the slip into bits. Moreover, it was despressing — the persistency with which I was followed by these notes, and the knowledge evinced by this man in the dark, of my habits and customs. It was positively weird and uncanny.

After this the notes ceased, for awhile at least, and I was free to devote myself with undisturbed mind to Williams's studio. His predictions were verified; there was little to do, and I made sad havoc among his chemicals and materials in my experiments.

Several days had passed very pleasantly, and I had almost forgotten the affair of the whisper, when the cashier came to me in the camera room. She was in a condition of virtuous indignation. Up to this time, apparently resenting the idea of my being in charge of the establishment, she had merely tolerated my existence, now she came to give me orders.

"There is a woman in the reception room you must see," she said.

There was trouble for me; I knew it from the peculiar emphasis our cashier gave to the word "woman." And I further knew that she had a poor opinion of our visitor, even doubts as to her moral character.

"What is it?" I asked, as professionally as I could.

"She wants to have a picture taken undressed. I want you to send her away." The cashier sniffed most virtuously.

"What!" I exclaimed, filled with the same virtuous indignation.

I dropped everything, determined to preserve the spotless purity of Williams's studio, even at the peril of my temper. I

went at once to the reception room. But I was unprepared for the appearance of the woman whose errand was fraught with such danger to the good repute of the establishment. A less likely person for a sitting in scant drapery it would have been difficult to conceive. Gray haired; sixty, if a day; two hundred, if she weighed a pound; her broad and ample figure was the very antithesis of Venus, or Juno, or Hebe, or Helen, or any other of those ancient ladies whose faces were their fortunes.

The cashier had made a sad blunder.

So, instead of meeting the woman fiercely, I mildly asked her wishes. Though the cashier was mistaken, in the reply of the woman I received as great a shock as if she had asked to be taken in the character of Mother Eve. She desired to know if we would take a picture of a bare foot.

The mysterious affair was up in a new form. I was confused for the moment; all sorts of possibilities crowded upon my mind. But dimly through my consciousness stole the sense of her words; it was not her bare foot, but that of another person that was to be photographed, and if we consented she would be back in an hour with that person.

We consented.

With all the severity I could summon, I upbraided the cashier for her blunder, trembling as I thought how a degree, more or less, of officiousness on her part might have put it beyond my power to get possession of a string to the mystery of the warnings. As it was, I was now to see the person owning the foot, and the foot itself that I had been so solemnly and mysteriously conjured to remember.

I awaited the flight of the hour with impatience. Promptly at its expiration I was notified by the cashier, now properly humbled, that the foot had arrived, and was in the dressing room.

I busied myself with the arrangements, and in a few moments, under the chaperonage of the old woman, the foot entered — closely veiled.

An increase of the mystery, not its elucidation.

That she was young was abundantly manifest in the outlines of her figure, in her movement and carriage, but not a glimpse

of her face could I secure. When I had recovered from my confusion and disappointment, I requested her to mount the platform I had prepared for her. She complied with a slight bow, holding out a hand to me to assist her — a hand from which I formed several conclusions, to wit: — that she was unmarried, since no wedding ring encircled her third finger; of wealth, since there was a year's liberal income on her fingers in valuable jewels; of the leisure class, since her hand was white, well kept, soft, unaccustomed to manual labor, not even pricked or roughened by the needle.

Why or how I became conscious that she was regarding me with marked interest, it is difficult for me to tell, as I could not see her eyes; but I was distinctly conscious of it, and it did not aid me in going about my work with composure.

However, having secured my focus, I asked her how she desired to have the picture. For the first time since she had been in the room, she spoke, telling me that she wanted four negatives — a front, and rear, and two side views. I gave less attention to her words than to her voice and the manner of her speech, and by them I judged her to be an educated, refined, and well-bred person.

As yet she had not exposed her foot. But now at my request she thrust it forward, lifting her skirt so that it barely cleared her instep.

I shook my head, that would not do. Taking a footstool, I threw a piece of black velvet over it and went to her. As I approached she withdrew her foot; the act was prompted, apparently, by instinctive modesty.

I seized the opportunity to seek the information I was burning to obtain. Telling her that as she had posed the result would not be an attractive picture, I showed her that a photograph of a foot of which no more than the instep was displayed, would scarcely be pretty, certainly not artistic; that such a pose might or might not serve her purpose, but unless I was enlightened as to that purpose, she stood in danger of defeating it. She was silent a moment, the while the old woman looked up anxiously at her. Then she laughingly said: —

"Suppose mere vanity is my purpose."

Such was not her purpose, as I immediately saw by the expression of the old woman's face, but I replied: —

"Then vanity would not be satisfied. Your pose would make neither a pretty nor an artistic picture."

After a moment's silence, she said: —

"Make an artistic picture."

I had failed, clearly shown by the smile of relief on the old woman's face. I put the stool on the platform before her, asking her to place her foot upon it, and to raise her skirt two or three inches higher than she had done before. She complied, hesitatingly to be sure, but complied nevertheless. No further encouragement to conversation was given me, and I was forced to finish my work with brief remarks to which she made no replies.

The sitting ended, and I was no wiser. As she descended from the platform I was summoned to the reception room by the cashier; — a gentleman wanted a letter photographed.

The gentleman, prompt and decided in manner, and keen in expression, was anxious to know whether the letter he held in his hand could be taken at once.

"My time is limited," he said, "and this letter cannot go out of my sight."

I assured him that, provided there were no difficulties in the letter itself, I could take it immediately, and that during the process it need not be out of his view. For answer he handed it to me. At the moment the two women entered the room, going to the cashier. I paused to listen. It appeared that they did not wish to give their names, that they would pay the full price for the dozen in advance, and the elder woman would call for the photographs when finished. This being adjusted, while the latter was paying the money her companion went to the mirror to arrange her veil. I gave my attention to the letter.

It was with difficulty that I could suppress my excitement. Staring out of the body of the letter, as if written in crimson ink, were these three words: — "Her bare foot." I know my hand trembled as I shot a swift glance at the young woman, and in that glance I caught a glimpse of her face as for a moment she pulled her veil aside — a most attractive face, at once indelibly impressed on my memory.

Turning from the mirror she came into close proximity with the man of the letter, but was apparently indifferent to his

presence. The elder woman also looked at the man a moment, while he cast a careless glance on both. I, watching eagerly, could not see that there was recognition, or surprise, or disturbance, or any other emotion, on the part of any one of the three.

The two women went out after bidding me good-by — the elder in words, the younger by a courteous inclination of the head. The man merely evinced impatience that I did not proceed with his affair. I was the agitated person. Finally, becoming sufficiently master of myself, I asked him to accompany me to the camera room, burning to read the letter, but fearing to show my curiosity.

It did not take long to get two negatives, and during the process the man watched the letter closely. In the dark room I assured myself that I had two perfect copies. Now, anxious to have him go, I hastened to tell him when he could have the copies in a finished state.

"You will not need this letter again?" he asked.

"No."

"Are you quite sure?" he persisted. "This letter will pass out of my hands this afternoon, and it is unlikely that I can obtain it again."

I confidently assured him that I had two perfect negatives. He was satisfied, and in the reception room paid the required deposit, giving his name and address: —

"Edward Harbeck, Columbus Hotel, City."

There is as great a perversity in events as there is in persons. The damsel who wanted to be "took beautiful" was very much in evidence that afternoon, multiplied several fold. Heretofore my afternoons had been my own, but now, when I was feverishly anxious to devote myself to the letter which promised to shed light on the mystery, my time was occupied by sitters as long as the day lasted.

That evening, however, I was able to read it at my leisure. And this was it: —

PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 5, 1896.

Dear Tim: — The affair is progressing well enough. To land a fish of the value of the one we are after isn't the work of an hour. Certain things had to be done. I had to find out whether Haswell knows anything of At-

wood; he doesn't. Then whether young Atwood knows anything of Haswell and her bare foot; I'm certain now that he doesn't. Somebody was good enough to walk away with enough of old Atwood's papers to spoil young Atwood's education on that point. But you keep on with Haswell's education, and let him get accustomed to the idea that others as well as himself have knowledge of her bare foot. Meanwhile I'll dust around after that bit of paper we want so much. Yours,

JIM.

I was not surprised to find my name in the letter; in fact, I expected it. But I was conscious of two distinct emotions — perplexity and disappointment. The mystery was deepened and the complications increased. Another factor, and with a name, had entered. Who was this Atwood, of whom I knew nothing, and who knew nothing of me and "her bare foot"? And how confident this "Jim" was that I knew all about somebody's bare foot! The more I considered the affair, the more confused I became. Everything tended to mystification, nothing to elucidation.

Another perusal suggested that something of value was involved in the mystery. Were "Jim" and "Tim," whoever these worthies might be, engaged in a conspiracy to obtain that valuable something? So skilfully was the letter phrased that I could obtain no information from it; everything was but conjecture. There was, however, the comforting assurance of no indications that my person or possessions were in peril — no threats of the capture of the one or attack upon the other. My personal dignity alone had been assailed; in a determination that I should not forget somebody's bare foot, some person or persons had taken liberties with my peace of mind. If their anxiety was as to the veiled lady's foot, as I made quite certain, they could cease their efforts, for I was not likely to forget it, nor her face either — both were very pretty.

I was so perplexed that I could formulate neither ideas nor a plan of action, but I rose from my speculations determined to solve the mystery if I could.

I was engaged for dinner at the house of a cousin that evening, and went home early to prepare for it. On my table, a letter awaited me. A glance at it revealed the now familiar writing, and enclosed was the same kind of a slip of paper.

"Remember! Her bare foot! The time grows near."

The mysterious admonition created no excitement now. I merely endorsed the envelope with the time and place of its receipt, and began my preparations.

The dinner was a more formal affair than I had anticipated, for the parlor was well filled when I appeared. As I entered I was met by my cousin, who said, with an air of importance: —

"You will see how good I am to you, when I present you to the lady you are to take into dinner."

She led me across the room and to the veiled lady.

"Miss Halliday," she said, "my favorite cousin, Mr. Haswell."

I bowed. Miss Halliday looked up, and a vivid blush swept over her face. I knew she recognized me, and I was put into a very good humor with myself by the feeling that, on my part, I had betrayed no recognition of her. She was quickly at her ease, settling at once into the belief, as was plain, that she was not identified by me as the lady of the foot.

It is nothing to the point of this story that the dinner was brilliant, or that I was charmed by Miss Halliday — her grace, her wit, and her vivacity. What was significant occurred after the guests had departed, and I had remained to smoke another cigar with my cousin's husband at his request. While we smoked my cousin said: —

"Charley, you have made an impression on a charming girl. Miss Halliday was persistent in her inquiries as to you, while you were with the gentlemen. Oh," he continued, "you did not suffer in my replies. But she asked me a most singular question — whether you were a photographer?"

"And your reply was what?" I asked composedly.

"Why, of course, that you were not, except as an amateur — that you were a man of leisure and independent circumstances."

"And now who is she?"

"The sweetest girl in New York — my dearest friend — daughter of a widow who is an old friend of my mother."

"Any mystery about her?" I asked lightly.

"Mystery!" exclaimed my cousin. "No, indeed! I've known her all my life. Her father was one of the Hallidays of Westchester."

All of which, however, was more mystery to me, for what could

such a girl have to do with "Jim," and "Tim," and "Atwood," and Harbeck, and "her bare foot"? But all I said was: —

"You'll take me to call on her?"

My cousin's eager consent was almost drowned in the burst of hearty laughter with which her husband exclaimed: —

"By Jove! A mutual case."

I left soon after. I may as well confess now, as at another time, that, mixed with wonder as to the relations Miss Halliday bore to the mystery, were thoughts of her charms, as I walked home in the cool, crisp night. While I was moving along at a rapid pace, my attention was attracted to two men approaching me. The collars of their coats were turned up, and their slouch hats were pulled down over their heads, so that I could not discern their features. As they came close to me, one bent down suddenly and peered into my face. I stepped aside quickly, thinking that an attack upon me was meditated, but the man assumed an erect position, and, as he passed on, said: —

"Remember! Her bare foot!"

I shouted back on the impulse of the moment: —

"Yes, and Atwood as well."

I walked on, but, looking back, was pleased to observe that my words had astounded them, for they stopped short looking at each other, the hand of one resting on the shoulder of the other.

Before I went to sleep that night I had a thought which gave me a cue to action, and which I put into effect the very next morning when Mr. Harbeck came for the copies of the letters.

As I handed him the package I took him to one side, where we could not be overheard.

"Mr. Harbeck," I said, "I have read that letter, and would like to ask you some questions concerning it."

He looked at me keenly for a moment, and then abruptly asked: —

"What do you know?"

"Nothing; but I want to know a good deal."

He again scrutinized me as if he would read my thoughts.

"My name is Haswell," I added.

He was surprised and interested immediately.

"Is it not Williams?" he asked.

"No," I replied. "Mr. Williams is a friend who, being absent

from town for some days, prevailed on me, who am only an amateur in the art, to take charge of his business. I have reason to believe that I am the Haswell referred to in that letter."

He did not reply at once, but seemed to be deeply thinking. At last he asked: — "Do you understand that letter?"

"Not at all."

"We ought to compare notes, I imagine," he said, "but I don't want to give away my hand without knowing what I am doing. Let me ask you a question. Why do you think you are the Haswell referred to?"

"You are cautious," I replied, laughing. "On my part, I do not want to play into the hands of a possible opponent. I will ask a question. Are you the 'Jim' or 'Tim' of this letter?"

"No," he replied promptly. "Now I'll ask you another question. Do you know the Atwood mentioned?"

"No; never heard of him before."

"Hum!" he muttered, pondering a moment. "Well, I'm a private detective retained by this Atwood. What does 'her bare foot' mean?"

"That is what I want to know."

"But this letter intimates that you do know."

"All the same, I do not."

Then I told him of the mysterious occurrences, including the visit of the veiled lady, but from an impulse I did not then stop to examine, concealed my knowledge of her.

"Your story throws but little light on the matter," he said. "Certain valuable papers of the late Mr. Atwood's estate are missing. The present Mr. Atwood suspects a clerk named Holmes, who was in his father's employ. In the effort to trace these missing papers, I have made the acquaintance of a friend of Holmes, and have followed him to New York. The morning I first came here, I saw in his apartment this letter in the handwriting of Holmes, and taking it, hurried to have it photographed, returning it to its place afterwards."

"Does Mr. Atwood know the meaning of 'her bare foot'?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "I ran over to Philadelphia yesterday to consult him on that point."

"It would seem as if the interests of Mr. Atwood were involved in the mystery troubling me," I said.

"That's just it. It is through you that things will come out if they come at all. I mean to stick very closely to you," he said, with a laugh, as he went off.

It was my custom every evening, if only for a moment, to visit my mother, who, by reason of age and infirmities, was confined to her room. On the evening of this day, having no engagement abroad, I sat myself down for a long chat with the old lady — a chat which I knew would be largely reminiscential, as the talk of very old people is apt to be. During the evening, and apropos of nothing, my mother asked: —

"You don't remember your Uncle Charles, do you?"

"Very indistinctly."

"No, I suppose not; he ran away from home as a boy, and was back only once after that. He was a sad trial — the black sheep of the family."

"What has brought him to your mind to-night, mother?" I asked.

"I found a paper of his to-day, in a box into which I have not looked for years. Do you remember a very sudden trip I made to Boston when you were about fifteen?"

I did recollect it, for it was associated with other events, the memory of which had kept remembrance of her trip alive.

"I went to see your uncle; he was dying in a hospital there. It was at that time that he gave me the paper, and a small writing desk, which he said contained something valuable. He was near his end then, and died soon after. I searched the desk thoroughly, but could find nothing, nor could I make anything of the paper. Finally I laid them both away and forgot them until to-day, when I stumbled on the paper."

She handed it to me. At the first glance the writing seemed to be merely an odd jumble of letters, but a careful scrutiny convinced me that it was in cypher. I told my mother so, and carried it to my room to study it undisturbed.

It was rather from a desire to occupy my mind, than with a hope of discovery, that I began the search for the key. At midnight I was about to throw it aside unsolved, when I thought of a simple cypher with which as a boy I amused myself. What

had suggested it was the word "Worcester" written in small characters in one corner of the paper.

Taking the first word of the cypher, "Olep," I guessed it to be, "This." On making the effort, it worked out. The method was simplicity itself: Finding the word "this" in Worcester's Dictionary, counting the letters, four, and adding ten, making fourteen, I counted down to the fourteenth word after "this," and taking the third letter of that fourteenth word and the three letters following, I spelled "olep." I had found the method of making the cypher.

The first sentence of my uncle's paper read: —

"Olep ca eat tchelhi fo rba rehe otfa."

Having found the method of building the cypher, by reversing it I was enabled to translate the line. And when I did, it can be imagined under what excitement I continued, when it is known that the first line as translated read: —

"This is the history of her bare foot."

The morning light was streaming through the windows when I threw myself on the bed successful, but exhausted by my labors.

The history, briefly told, was that my uncle, in his vagrant ramblings over the world, had united fortunes with a man named Atwood, from Philadelphia, and in their travels had reached the city of Pegu, in the Burmah Empire. Seventy miles away were the celebrated ruby mines, and though warned not to do so, since the mines were closely guarded as the possession of the dominant prince, thither they went. While there, my uncle found what he supposed to be a common stone, but which Atwood, having some knowledge of geology and mineralogy, believed to be a valuable rose ruby. An outcry being raised against their presence, my uncle threw the stone away, for possession by a stranger was sufficient cause for death; but he and his companion were closely searched, and though nothing of value was found upon them, they were placed in confinement for some time. Atwood was the first one freed, and before leaving Pegu, managed to convey to my uncle the information that he was going to Calcutta, and would wait a reasonable time for him there. Some weeks after my uncle was released. On the day he was first at liberty, a native girl who was in association with him — how or why did not appear —

came to him with the stone. When my uncle had thrown it away, unobserved by the guards, it had fallen near where this girl was standing, and she had concealed it by the simple method of putting her foot upon it. While my uncle and Atwood were being searched, she had closed her long and flexible toes over it, and without attracting attention, had managed to convey it, held by her toes, to a spot where she could conceal it, without detection.

Frightened by its very possession, my uncle hurriedly departed from Pegu. What became of the native girl was not told, but my uncle reached Calcutta in safety, where he met Atwood and admitted that person's right to a half interest in the stone. They called it "Her Bare Foot," in honor of the foot that had saved it for them. Having agreed to dispose of the stone, they next quarreled as to who should have possession of it pending realization. My uncle prevailed, but the quarrel separated the two, for they parted after having written "Her Bare Foot" on a piece of paper, tearing it into two parts, each taking one, and entering into a written agreement that the part should represent the interest of its possessor in the stone.

What became of the two thereafter, or why they never met, nor communicated with each other, the record did not disclose. What followed in the statement was in the nature of a will or charge that I, his nephew, named for him, should inherit his interest; that I should have the stone cut and, disposing of it, pay over one half of the net proceeds to Atwood if alive, or if dead, then to his heirs, and declaring that the stone was in a secret recess of the small writing desk.

There was an anxious hour before the desk was found — a castaway in a lumber room — and further anxiety until the spring of the secret recess was discovered.

There it was, still in the rough, wrapped in faded yellow tissue paper, the largest ruby I ever saw or expect to see again. With the stone was a torn slip with the words: —

"re Foot."

I sent for Mr. Harbeck early that morning and told him of my discovery. He immediately suggested that Holmes having come across a similar paper among Mr. Atwood's documents, and finding that young Atwood had no knowledge of it, had determined

to set up a claim for the half interest, and had begun operations on me in the belief that I had inherited the stone.

This turned out to be the exact truth, and Harbeck, through the knowledge thus obtained, compelled Holmes to yield up the stolen papers. Mr. Atwood was so much pleased over the recovery of these papers, since they settled all doubts as to his interests in very valuable property, that he refused to take his share in the proceeds of the stone, saying that I was entitled to all for the service I had rendered in the restoration of his own property. At the time, neither of us knew the value of the stone.

. . . . . .

"Her Bare Foot" has been cut in Amsterdam, and is certainly the largest ruby known outside of Ceylon — much, much the largest. Perhaps the sensation created in Europe last summer, by the Burgatarian Emperor's purchase of a ruby for a million francs, is recalled by this story. That ruby was "Her Bare Foot."

The veiled lady? Ah! Well, you see Miss Halliday had nothing whatever to do with the mystery. That was the great joke. She only happened — stumbled, as it were, into it, and at a time when it served to confuse and complicate it. She had a cousin who was a sculptor, and who wanted to model her foot. But her mother objected so strenuously, not so much to the sitting as to the man himself, that the daughter compromised matters by stealing away with an old servant and having photographs taken for the sculptor's use.

The best joke of all is that Miss Halliday has given herself to me in marriage, and though I have disposed of "Her Bare Foot," I am still the owner of her bare foot.

Miss Phoebe and Mr. Lorton.

BY CHARLES SLOAN REID.

HE big, square, weatherworn house looked in its silence and isolation like the relic of a long dead past. Not the abandoned relic, however, for the hand of a painstaking florist and gardener was in evidence in the little yard on which the house fronted.

Flowers, everywhere flowers, — geraniums, dahlias, bachelor's buttons, lilacs and syringas in their season, and always roses, red, and white, and yellow, filled the flower beds and crowded against the fence, giving of their fragrance to every passer-by. And from floor to roof of the long piazza, a matted mass of moonflower vines softened the entering sunlight.

In spite of the flowers, however, there was such an atmosphere of sacred quiet about the house that except for the presence of a tabby cat on the piazza it would have seemed to be uninhabited. But any urchin along the street could have told you who lived there; it was "Miss Phœbe," while the question, "How long has she lived there?" would invariably have brought the answer, "She's *always* lived there." And indeed, for more than twenty-five years that part of the outskirts of the city had known the good works of Miss Phœbe's charitable and kindly hand. How old Miss Phœbe was no one knew, unless perhaps it was the aged family servant, Aunt Dinah, who was her only companion; nor, indeed, did any one care to know. It was enough that she was still young in the beautiful attributes of heart and mind.

Just across the street from Miss Phœbe's residence stood a plain, grim, old two-story building, whose front doorstep abutted on the pavement. To add to its forbidding aspect, the front window blinds were always closed, and the somber appearance of the place awed the eye with its suggestion of melancholy. As of the other house across the way, any one in the neighborhood could have told

you who the occupant was, and of him, too, would have said that he had always lived there.

Certainly every morning for more than twenty-five years Mr. Lorton had been seen to issue from his front door punctually at seven o'clock, in order to ride down to the city in the old horse car which passed at that hour. And from her window Miss Phœbe had watched his departure each morning, and noted his return at evening, by the faint glow of a light through the chinks of the ever-closed blinds.

A chance sojourner in that part of the city must have wondered what were the forces governing those two lives in their orbital range. Mr. Lorton was quiet almost to mysteriousness; his step was always the same; his movements, the expression of his face, his attire, in fact, his whole personality, seemed — except for a few gray hairs and added lines — unchanged in a quarter of a century. What might be the real man behind the mask no one knew, for more than a bow in passing Mr. Lorton seldom bestowed upon any one. As for Miss Phœbe, though she sighed, sometimes, when she saw him come and go in his apparent cheerlessness, she seemed to know as little of her neighbor as did the rest of the suburban residents; but pruned her shrubs, and trained her vines and flowers, and scarcely ever spoke of the lonely man across the way.

All this is the sum of the impressions made upon those among whom these two solitaries lived. Sometimes in the quiet seclusion of her own home, Miss Phœbe's eyes softened with a tender light as the whisperings of memory recounted the scenes of other years. With memory's pulsations came the song notes of birds whose music had a peculiar significance, and the breath of flowers that were sweet with a peculiar fragrance. But the ebb succeeding the flow carried back to the depths of the past the quickened sensations, and Miss Phœbe lived again in her present sympathies.

Thus had passed twenty-five years when, one morning, there occurred an unprecedented break in the chain forged by long habit: the old horse car passed down on its seven-o'clock trip, and Mr. Lorton failed to make his appearance. Naturally Miss Phœbe was moved from her wonted placidity, as one planet in a system is disturbed by the least erratic movement of another in its orbit. All

through the long hours of the morning, she watched the door of the house across the street, for the appearance of its owner; but at last she was forced to conclude that some important engagement must have called him forth before the fixed hour of his rising. Surely such an irregularity must precipitate the little suburban social system, for a day at least, into some unheard-of disorder. But the day passed much as had other days. Only Miss Phœbe felt the disturbance, and, as time wore on, her uneasiness, too, lost itself in the little events of the hour.

Late in the afternoon she went about the yard, attending the flowers with her usual care. Along the little old picket fence that marked the limits of the yard the bluebirds fluttered happily, their softly tinted plumage beautiful in the rays of the sinking sun; while the music of their peculiar noting accorded harmoniously with the rose fragrance of Miss Phœbe's flower garden. There was a small square hole in the side of one of the gate posts, where a pair of the prettiest of the blue-coated songsters had nested every year, feeling secure from molestation under Miss Phœbe's kindly protection.

It was the season of the year when summer begins to sink slowly into the arms of autumn, turning the ephemeral roses of her lips to the solvent kiss of her maturer and more lovely sister. As the early twilight gathered, the song notes of the bluebirds grew less frequent and more plaintive, and when Miss Phœbe had completed her pleasant task she strolled down to the little gate, and leaned against the low railing to listen to them, and to watch the golden sunset whose central glory illuminated the end of the long street whose lines converged to that splendid point in the distance. From time to time she glanced at the closed house over the way. It was silent and still. It was not yet time for the return of Mr. Lorton, if he had gone away that morning.

While Miss Phœbe was leaning against the little gate, her spirit drifting with the gentle current of happy memories, she was suddenly startled from her dreamland voyage by a strange noise in the post at her side. Quickly she glanced around, just in time to see a rat leap from the little square hole in the post, dragging with it to the ground the débris of a bluebird's nest of the season past. The agile rodent scampered away amongst the ground-clinging

you who the occupant was, and of him, too, would have said that he had always lived there.

Certainly every morning for more than twenty-five years Mr. Lorton had been seen to issue from his front door punctually at seven o'clock, in order to ride down to the city in the old horse car which passed at that hour. And from her window Miss Phœbe had watched his departure each morning, and noted his return at evening, by the faint glow of a light through the chinks of the ever-closed blinds.

A chance sojourner in that part of the city must have wondered what were the forces governing those two lives in their orbital range. Mr. Lorton was quiet almost to mysteriousness; his step was always the same; his movements, the expression of his face, his attire, in fact, his whole personality, seemed — except for a few gray hairs and added lines — unchanged in a quarter of a century. What might be the real man behind the mask no one knew, for more than a bow in passing Mr. Lorton seldom bestowed upon any one. As for Miss Phœbe, though she sighed, sometimes, when she saw him come and go in his apparent cheerlessness, she seemed to know as little of her neighbor as did the rest of the suburban residents; but pruned her shrubs, and trained her vines and flowers, and scarcely ever spoke of the lonely man across the way.

All this is the sum of the impressions made upon those among whom these two solitaries lived. Sometimes in the quiet seclusion of her own home, Miss Phœbe's eyes softened with a tender light as the whisperings of memory recounted the scenes of other years. With memory's pulsations came the song notes of birds whose music had a peculiar significance, and the breath of flowers that were sweet with a peculiar fragrance. But the ebb succeeding the flow carried back to the depths of the past the quickened sensations, and Miss Phœbe lived again in her present sympathies.

Thus had passed twenty-five years when, one morning, there occurred an unprecedented break in the chain forged by long habit: the old horse car passed down on its seven-o'clock trip, and Mr. Lorton failed to make his appearance. Naturally Miss Phœbe was moved from her wonted placidity, as one planet in a system is disturbed by the least erratic movement of another in its orbit. All

through the long hours of the morning, she watched the door of the house across the street, for the appearance of its owner; but at last she was forced to conclude that some important engagement must have called him forth before the fixed hour of his rising. Surely such an irregularity must precipitate the little suburban social system, for a day at least, into some unheard-of disorder. But the day passed much as had other days. Only Miss Phœbe felt the disturbance, and, as time wore on, her uneasiness, too, lost itself in the little events of the hour.

Late in the afternoon she went about the yard, attending the flowers with her usual care. Along the little old picket fence that marked the limits of the yard the bluebirds fluttered happily, their softly tinted plumage beautiful in the rays of the sinking sun; while the music of their peculiar noting accorded harmoniously with the rose fragrance of Miss Phœbe's flower garden. There was a small square hole in the side of one of the gate posts, where a pair of the prettiest of the blue-coated songsters had nested every year, feeling secure from molestation under Miss Phœbe's kindly protection.

It was the season of the year when summer begins to sink slowly into the arms of autumn, turning the ephemeral roses of her lips to the solvent kiss of her maturer and more lovely sister. As the early twilight gathered, the song notes of the bluebirds grew less frequent and more plaintive, and when Miss Phœbe had completed her pleasant task she strolled down to the little gate, and leaned against the low railing to listen to them, and to watch the golden sunset whose central glory illuminated the end of the long street whose lines converged to that splendid point in the distance. From time to time she glanced at the closed house over the way. It was silent and still. It was not yet time for the return of Mr. Lorton, if he had gone away that morning.

While Miss Phœbe was leaning against the little gate, her spirit drifting with the gentle current of happy memories, she was suddenly startled from her dreamland voyage by a strange noise in the post at her side. Quickly she glanced around, just in time to see a rat leap from the little square hole in the post, dragging with it to the ground the débris of a bluebird's nest of the season past. The agile rodent scampered away amongst the ground-clinging

vines, and Miss Phœbe stooped down to pick up the nest. It seemed the first time that the little square hole had ever been empty; and as she arose, she stopped to peer into the long-inhabited shelter of the nesting birds, now cleared of its little specimen of bird architecture. As she glanced into the cavity, her eye caught sight of some white object far back in its depths. After trying in vain to make out what it was, she picked up a little stick and thrusting it into the hole, encountered — what? It seemed only a piece of waste paper, yet at the sight of it, Miss Phœbe straightened up and leaned forward with one elbow placed on top of the old fence post, while her breath came and went in little quick gasps. What was there about the finding of that bit of paper to set the gossips of memory a-whispering over the scenes and incidents of a long ago? Little, apparently, and yet Miss Phœbe was listening to the whisperings.

Finally, with an effort, she roused herself, and this time dragged the little paper from the hole. Perhaps the bluebirds had carried it in, and finding it unavailable for their use, had pushed it to the rear out of their way. At any rate, it had evidently lain there for many years, as the curves of the water marks were brown with age. Half eagerly, half fearfully, she unfolded the little sheet, and, although the twilight was deepening, and Miss Phœbe's eyes were not as strong as they once were, she read on until the last faded letter was deciphered. Then, without a sound, she sank down and buried her face in her hands.

It was almost dark when Miss Phœbe finally dragged herself up from the damp grass and entered the house. Once inside the stately old drawing room, she drew the folded paper from her bosom and again read it over, while two tears coursed slowly down her cheeks. It was strange that this bit of paper should bring up recollections of a nature to start the tears from the eyes of one ordinarily so even tempered and sweetly disposed. But whatever the contents of the sheet, Miss Phœbe placed a peculiar valuation upon it. That was evident from the solemn care with which she approached an old brown cabinet which stood in a corner of the room, and, taking therefrom a little rosewood casket, laid the scrap of paper within it. Then she turned out the light, and crept to the window, where she sat looking out across the

way. Evidently, she was still uneasy about her neighbor, for there was no light from his window, nor did one appear while Miss Phœbe watched, although it was late when she retired.

The following morning she again took her place by the window. But the horse car passed, and Mr. Lorton had not appeared.

During the day Miss Phœbe called Aunt Dinah to her room.

"Aunt Dinah," she said, "I believe something has happened to Mr. Lorton, or he is ill over there in that house all alone."

"I spec' you done said it 'bout right, Miss Phœbe, 'case I 'ain' seed 'im to-day, nor yistiddy, neither."

"O Aunt Dinah, it would be awful if he should die there all alone," and Miss Phœbe turned away her head.

The afternoon wore away. Aunt Dinah moved about the house noiselessly, and Miss Phœbe remained seated near the window where she might observe any movement in the house across the street. At length the shadows began to grow long, and the anxiety of Miss Phœbe's charitable heart overcame her patience.

"Aunt Dinah," she said, as she passed through the hallway, "I am going to Mr. Lorton's. I feel that it is my duty, for I am sure he must be ill; and think, Aunt Dinah, if he should die there with no one" — surely the sweet voice trembled — "with no one to hear his last words."

Out in the yard she sought among the late flowers until she found a single white rose almost ready to scatter its petals. This she plucked, then, passing through the gateway, crossed the street.

The Lorton house was an old-fashioned one with a street door at the end of an open piazza. Through this doorway Miss Phœbe entered, and advanced along the piazza, made dark and gloomy by the dense, untrimmed growth of shrubbery in the little side yard. Approaching the door of what was probably Mr. Lorton's lodging apartment, she tapped gently upon the panel. After a moment a weak voice from within said: "Come in."

Miss Phœbe hesitated a moment, while she felt the blood rush to her temples; then she firmly turned the knob and entered. It was a dark, old-fashioned room, rendered still darker by the heavy shutters, but, as Miss Phœbe's eyes accustomed themselves to the gloom, she made out, huddled on a bed near the window, a tossing figure. At the sound of her step the figure turned, revealing the

dazed, fever-bright eyes of Mr. Lorton; then a hand wandered toward a table that stood at the head of the bed, and on which rested a pitcher of water, a goblet, — and, yes, Miss Phœbe drew a long breath as she saw that the hand was reaching for a little box in which lay the long-sered petals of a once red rose.

With a swift impulse Miss Phœbe placed the white rose over the withered petals of the red one. Then laying her cool hand on the hot fingers of the sick man, she said gently: —

"You are ill; why didn't you send for some one — for — for me?"

The eyes of the sick man met hers with a half-dazed expression. Then he turned to the wall.

"I know you," he muttered. "You seem real, but you're not, — you, with your white rose — "

A spasm of fear stole the pink from Miss Phœbe's cheeks, but still she clasped the twitching hand firmly in her own.

"Listen," she said, "I'm going to send for a doctor now — at once — and then I will come back and take care of you."

Again the fevered eyes turned to hers, and again they sought the wall.

"No use," murmured the hoarse voice, "no use to live; no future — no one who cares — only red roses — red roses — "

But his visitor, her soft gray eyes misted with tears, was already hurrying across the street; and though it was dark, Aunt Dinah was despatched at once for a doctor, while Miss Phœbe, hastily gathering from her stores such remedies as she thought might relieve the sick man, hastened back to his bedside.

For more than a fortnight Mr. Lorton lay in the grip of the fever, attended daily by the physician, and hourly by a gray-eyed little woman, who always wore in the folds of her dark gown a single white rose. Was there in the look or fragrance of that flower some talismanic power of healing? If so, the fact was not set down in the doctor's case book; but even the physician acknowledged that after the crisis was passed the rapid convalescence of his patient seemed almost miraculous. Three weeks from the night that his neighbor made her first call, he had improved so rapidly that Miss Phœbe ceased from her visits, though each day she sent Aunt Dinah with little delicacies and cordial

inquiries. Finally, one golden autumn evening, Mr. Lorton took his first walk down the suburban street; an occasion long remembered by the neighbors, who marked with delight the old kindly smile, and his wonted pleasant though short bow of greeting.

It was soon after his departure that Miss Phœbe stole out to the front gate to indulge in her favorite recreation, that of watching the sunset at the far end of the street; so soon that — wrapt in her twilight reveries — she had no thought of his return until she looked up and saw him pausing before her gate. As his eyes met hers, she flushed ever so slightly, stammered some little phrase of pleasure for his recovery, and then turned toward the house.

"Phœbe," said Mr. Lorton.

The rose flush on Miss Phœbe's cheeks grew to crimson, as she again leaned her elbow on the gate.

"Well, John."

He put out his hand, in which she allowed her own to rest for a moment.

"Phœbe, it's twenty-five years since — since we used to stand and talk here together at sunset, but — is the little post-office still open in the old gate post?"

"It is open now; but, O John!" exclaimed Miss Phœbe, burying her face in her hands, "I did not get your last letter until the day before I found you ill."

"Phœbe, Phœbe!" cried Mr. Lorton, gently drawing her hands away from her face. The tears stood in her eyes, and John thought them a gentle shower that freshened the springtime beauty of her life. "Have you got the letter now? Let me see it."

He drew open the gate and went inside, while Miss Phœbe took the little scrap of paper from her bosom and gave it to him. There was a rustic settee near the gate, on which they seated themselves; there Mr. Lorton read the words that he had penned more than twenty-five years before.

The letter was undated, and read:—

My Dear Phœbe:— You tell me you are going away in the morning to be gone a whole month, a length of time that to me will seem a whole year. I feel that I cannot let you go away without some token. I have tried to express, not only in words but in a thousand other ways, my consuming love for you. Now, O Phœbe, blest angel of my dreams! send me a simple token

before you go. Will you be my wife? May I hope? If I may, then send me a pure white rose; if I must no longer hope, then send me the blood-red rose, that I may see in it my own poor bleeding heart. Your ever devoted

JOHN.

Mr. Lorton's hand which held the letter dropped to his knee.

"And, Phœbe, you sent me a red rose that evening."

"O John, how could I know? It was by chance that I sent it as a token of remembrance. Then for some reason we went away that night instead of the next day, so that I never thought to look in the letter box. When I came back a month later, the bluebirds had builded there, and it was only by accident that I ever received your letter, twenty-five years after it was written!"

Then, in a few broken phrases, she told of how the long-concealed bit of paper had been discovered, and of how, on the afternoon she found him ill, she had covered the withered petals of the red rose on his table with a fresh white one.

But before she could finish Mr. Lorton was close at her side, his hand outstretched.

"Phœbe," he said hoarsely, "if — if it was for more than common charity you brought me that rose, then give me — give me now the answer I've missed for all these years."

Without a word Miss Phœbe reached out a trembling hand to a near-by rosebush on which bloomed a single late white rose. Plucking the flower slowly, carefully, that she might not loosen a single petal, she held it out, — still without a word. Quite as silently the man closed his fingers about that symbolic blossom and about the hand that gave it. And straightway on the faces of both there dawned the look of those for whom the world had suddenly turned back through twenty-five years, and for whom the bluebirds sang with all the ecstasy of long past springs.

A No Quorum Night.

BY L. A. LEONARD.

NY one who belonged to the old Easton Lyceum will be sure to preserve a vivid recollection of the gatherings of that famous body, and above all, of the genial presiding officer.

That dignitary, Mr. Matt Spencer, was an old man in those days, — a little rising seventy, but he was as jolly as the most youthful, and enjoyed a good story as thoroughly as did any of the young men with whom he delighted to associate.

Usually our meetings were so well attended as to leave little time for any save the serious objects for which the Lyceum existed. So it was an extraordinary occasion when, one night, a driving storm kept away so many of the faithful that the customary quorum failed to show up. That the dozen present, however, must have embraced some pretty good material, I feel sure, for as I look back, I remember that they included a future United States senator, two or three able lawyers, one or two future successful newspaper and literary men, and one man who has since held half a dozen prominent positions in his State.

Naturally, with such a gathering, even a 'no quorum' meeting couldn't prove tame. And though the regular program was out of the question, — a discussion of Shakespeare's intention concerning the character of Iago was to have been in order, — it was unanimously voted to devote the evening to story telling, — with the result that our narratives gradually took on an impressiveness in keeping with the temper of the night.

After various yarn-spinnings, — whose subjects don't matter here, — some one turned to Mr. Spencer with a request for one of his famous tales.

A look of serious intentness deepened the lines in the old

man's face as he glanced around to see if the rest of us were equally anxious for a story from him. Of course we were.

Reaching for his old pipe, and pulling off a few scales of tobacco from the plug that had become well dried in the drawer of his table, he pushed them into the bowl, and asked for a match. After the pipe was sufficiently started so that it could be held between his thumb and forefinger without going out as he reached the most interesting passages, he began: —

"This is the one ghost story," said he, "which is duly authenticated and certified to by the records of a court. I heard my father tell it, and he heard it direct from his father, who was alive when the incidents happened and the case was tried. In those days the County of Talbot embraced the entire peninsular part of Maryland, and although the legal matters took place in Easton, the Osborns lived in that part of the State which now forms the County of Kent.

"Mr. Osborn was a highly respected Englishman, who had come to this country with his five boys, for the purpose of bettering his fortunes. The sons had grown up, and by their united efforts the family had become large land owners. His extensive estate was divided into two parts,—'Glenham' and 'Willow Crest,' which lay some six miles apart. Both were excellent properties in Colonial days, but Glenham was the more valuable of the two. Mr. Osborn died, and Peter, the eldest son, attempted in the county court to establish a verbal will by which Glenham was to be left to him, and Willow Crest to be divided among the other sons. The will was a very unfair one, as we regard things to-day, but under the English idea of primogeniture, which was firmly fixed in the people's minds, such an arrangement was not unusual in those days. So, though in a mild way Peter's brothers resisted his efforts to establish the will, no great bitterness was shown on either side, and the indications were that Peter would win his case and secure possession of Glenham. But the case was postponed from week to week until, finally, Peter came to court one Tuesday morning with a look of consternation on his face, avowing his purpose of withdrawing from the effort to establish the will. When court opened, he said he was there with some witnesses to prove a most extraordinary incident, and that

he desired to withdraw the non-cupitane will which he had attempted to set up, and to ask that his father's estate be equally divided among the children. Then he told the following remarkable story, and established the truth of it by witnesses whom he had brought: —

"'While at work in the field the other day, two neighbors were walking along with me towards the turning row. We were discussing the will and the probabilities of my success. As we approached the end of the row my father suddenly appeared at the side of the fence. He said to me, in a clear and distinct voice, "Peter, don't do that. Don't try to rob your brothers in that way. You know I never intended that it should be done."

"'While he spoke, my two neighbors, Mr. Hale and Mr. Cressup, heard the voice and understood every word that he said. When he ceased speaking, he laid his hand on the top rail of the fence, and we all saw the smoke arise from it. A moment later he was gone, but the print of the forefinger and thumb were distinctly burned into the rail. I have brought the rail with me that the judges may examine it, and Mr. Hale and Mr. Cressup are both ready to testify to the truth of what I have said.'

"It is recorded that the judges examined the rail and heard the testimony of the two witnesses, both of whom testified to having heard the voice, although neither of them saw the figure of Squire Osborn, as did Peter. And, furthermore, when this case was being recorded by the clerk of the court, a drop of blood fell upon the book as the last word was written, and this drop of blood may be examined to-day on the oldest record book of this County."

Tim Halliday's Baby.

BY ERSKINE M. HAMILTON.

THERE were sounds of lamentation in Nineveh. Not in the ancient city of that name, but a straggling Western settlement of a dozen or more shanties of rough board construction, situated by the side of a railroad, with high wooded bluffs behind and a river flowing peacefully below. A Nineveh whose inhabitants were exclusively Irish, and the male inhabitants whereof were all in the employ of the railroad company on whose land their little homes were temporarily erected. Naturally, in so small a community everybody knew more of his neighbor's affairs than of his own, and everybody knew Tim Halliday, and especially Tim Halliday's baby.

Therefore the lamentations, for on this special day Tim Halliday's baby was lost. To be sure, this was not the first time that the baby had proved a source of public anxiety, for he seemed born to mysterious happenings,— so much so, indeed, that some of the worthy matrons of Nineveh had begun to regard him as uncanny and out of the usual order of nature. Already he had been nearly drowned in a cistern, had hung himself in a blackberry bush, had fallen over a thirty-foot precipice, and had gone through various other perilous adventures, any one of which would have killed an ordinary baby; but out of them all he had emerged unscathed, and his sturdy little feet still toddled along perilous ways, and his innocent blue eyes still sought other dangers to wander into.

This time, however, he was lost. The last knowledge of him dated back to the early morning, when he had been seen by a neighbor near a clump of blackberry bushes not far from his mother's door. After that he could not be found, and great was the woe in Nineveh over his disappearance. With grief enveloping her rotund person, Mrs. McQuaide walked over to Mrs.

Halliday's door to condole. "An' isn't it sad indade," she remarked, "to see the swate bye taken from under yez very nose when yez not lookin'?"

Mrs. Halliday did not reply, but sat in her low doorway, rocking backward and forward, and giving vent to loud expressions of anguish. Several of her neighbors stood about her, red-eyed, offering such comfort as they could.

"But he'll come back all right," continued Mrs. McQuaide reassuringly. "That baby's got a charm on him, I can't know, an' he'll be home prisently."

In spite of this soothing prophecy, he did not come, however, and one after another the searching parties returned, with no news of the missing infant. All through the day the exploration was kept up without avail. But late in the afternoon, as the sun was sinking behind the bluffs, an astounding thing happened. Mrs. Halliday had just stepped to the door, in reply to a call from a passing neighbor, when behold, as she looked down the path, there stood the baby!

"The saints be praised!" she cried, half sobbing, as she rushed out and caught him to her breast.

In a moment all Nineveh was agog, and Mrs. McQuaide and Mrs. O'Toole, Mrs. McDermott and others of the town's amiable matrons, were on the spot and overwhelming the happy mother with congratulations that were honest and sincere.

"It do be just as I told yez," asserted Mrs. McQuaide in an aside to Mrs. O'Toole. "That child will come to no harm — mind that, now! He was born with a spell on him, an' is under protection."

"The Lord save us! an is that so?" ejaculated Mrs. O'Toole, piously crossing herself.

"Yes, that be it, sure, an'— Mrs. Halliday, what's the child got in his hand?"

Mrs. Halliday, who was busily talking to the others, turned at that question and looked at the baby's hand. The small pink fist was tightly closed about something, and upon its being pried open a silver dollar fell to the ground. For a moment the group were too astonished to speak. Mrs. McQuaide's tongue was the first to be unloosed.

"The divil fly away wid me! Where, in the name of the blissed saints, d'ye be thinkin' he got that?"

No one could answer, and no one made reply. Mrs. Halliday could offer no explanation. Silver dollars were not very plentiful in Nineveh, and when and where the baby had secured one was a mystery. Questioning the child had no effect.

"Baby's hungry," was all that the grave mite would say, and the matter had to rest there.

Several days passed uneventfully, and then again it was announced that Tim Halliday's baby was lost. This time his absence was not so prolonged, for after several hours' search, Mrs. McQuaide found him asleep under a blackberry bush. The good lady picked him up triumphantly and carried him to his mother, when with great volubility she began to explain how she came to find him. But in the midst of her vehemence she stopped suddenly, as two silver dollars slipped from the baby's hand and jingled to the floor. Mrs. McQuaide looked at Mrs. Halliday, and Mrs. Halliday looked at Mrs. McQuaide.

"Mrs. Halliday," began Mrs. McQuaide, "I'll be — that is, I'm thinkin' this be quaire doin's, an' I'm just goin' out of here, that's what I am!" And with almost unseemly haste the good lady hurried from the room.

Mrs. Halliday sat down on the floor and looked at her baby with something akin to awe.

"Well," she soliloquized, "they do be sayin' he's under protection — but whether saints or the divil do be sindin' thim silver dollars, I can't know."

And no one knew; and the mystery grew in Nineveh. As for the baby, he wandered about in his innocent way, finding amusement wherever he could, and entirely unconscious of the excitement he had produced.

Not so his mother. The feeling of awe that first smote her at the sight of the second supply of silver dollars so possessed her mind, that for days she followed up her small son like a detective shadowing a suspected character.

So passed five days — a week — ten days — and Nineveh had just begun to draw a free breath once more when, presto! the Halliday baby disappeared again as if by magic. While his

mother was busy inside the shanty he had been out of her sight for a few minutes, and when she looked for him he was nowhere to be found.

Angry at herself for her lack of watchfulness, Mrs. Halliday sat down in a corner of the room to think and wonder. This time, however, only an hour or so passed, when through the bright sunlight of the open doorway toddled the baby, and, running straight to his mother, dropped a silver dollar into her lap!

This was too much. Worried and weeping, Mrs. Halliday placed the money where she had put the rest of the mysterious treasure — on a shelf under the picture of Saint Patrick, and then hurried to the domicile of Mrs. McQuaide, to talk the matter over with her.

"Mrs. McQuaide," she began, pleadingly, "it's hurted I am with all this trouble. It gives me a pain in me heart;" and in her uncertainty as to the anatomical position of that organ, she clasped her hands across her stomach.

"Well," said Mrs. McQuaide, with oracular emphasis, "it's mesilf as has been thinkin' about that same, an' I've been discussin' the matter wid Mrs. O'Toole an' Mrs. McDermott. Mrs. O'Toole, she be thinkin' he be haunted by a banshee, an' we better be seein' Father Murphy about it."

"Hoot, woman!" interrupted Mrs. Halliday indignantly, "there be no banshees in America, they all do be in the ould counthry."

"That's what I told Mrs. O'Toole," answered Mrs. McQuaide. "An' I axed her how could they get here, an' she says they just do be comin' over, invisible like, on board the ships like other folk."

"Well, my child have no banshee — that's what!" declared Mrs. Halliday, with emphasis.

"Of course not. If he do, he's the divil's own banshee for bringin' silver dollars. I'd like one mesilf like that," replied Mrs. McQuaide, soothingly. "But anyway, we all thought that it would be a good thing to go to the city an' ask Father Murphy for a charm to put on the child's neck."

To Mrs. Halliday, now so alarmed at the uncanny happenings that had befallen her small son that she was ready to adopt almost any plan for relief, the idea seemed one to be grasped at. So

straight to Father Murphy, in a nearby town, Tim Halliday went the very next morning, and told the story of the baby's mysterious doings. But when he explained the object of his quest to the priest, that reverend gentleman only laughed.

"Get along home with you," he said. "If it's the silver dollars you're afraid of, it's the saints sent 'em — mind that, now! And tell Mrs. Halliday to hope they'll send more. The idea of two fools asking for a charm to keep away the blessings of heaven! Whoever heard of the like?"

Meantime, while Tim Halliday was interviewing Father Murphy, new mysteries had developed in Nineveh. Incidentally, Tim Halliday's baby had disappeared, but that was to be expected, and it was supposed that he would turn up all right with the usual silver dollar. But he didn't. The event that had so roused the small settlement was this: About eleven o'clock Mrs. McQuaide came running out of her shanty, wringing her hands and crying bitterly. Indeed, her anguish was so loud and vehement that Mrs. O'Toole, Mrs. McDermott, Mrs. Halliday, and all the other ladies of Nineveh came out to discover the cause.

"An' what's the matter wid ye?" questioned Mrs. O'Toole, hurrying forward and placing her hand sympathizingly on Mrs. McQuaide's shoulder. "Is it the misery in the stomach?"

"No, it's more fearsome than that," moaned Mrs. McQuaide, "I've been robbed!"

"Robbed?" ejaculated all of the ladies in a breath.

"Yis, that's the way it be," replied Mrs. McQuaide, wiping her eyes with her apron. "I've been savin' up some money this while back, for Barney an' me to start in some little business for oursilves, when we should be ready for it. Of course the banks in town do be breakin', as we all know, and I thought it would be a dale safer to keep the money mesilf. So, the fool that I was, I did that same."

"An' how did yez lose it?" broke in Mrs. O'Toole.

"It's mesilf as is comin' to that," pursued Mrs. McQuaide, with a slight show of dignity. "Ye all know that whin we built the shanty we put it over a big hole that was already there, because it made an ilegant cellar to keep pertaties an' the like. I can't know who digged the hole in the first place, but the back

end of it was boarded up at the time we found it. Well, thin, I pulled one of thim boards loose, an' put me money in behind, in an' ould tay-kettle. Well, fool that I was, I kept puttin' in the money in there, mostly in silver, until such times as we should nade it. But to-day, whin I went to look for it, I found some thaivin' villin had dug a tunnel from the other way an' took most of the money."

"An' why didn't he stale it all?" asked Mrs. Halliday excitedly.

"It's yersilf that can answer that as well as me," responded Mrs. McQuaide, in accents of deep gloom. "The thafe left the tay-kettle, an' some small change in it — bad cess to him!"

Several of the ladies' husbands had joined the group by this time, and heard the tale of woe. Among them was Mr. O'Toole. As he listened his face suddenly brightened.

"I niver thought of it until now, about that tunnel," he said, "but I think I have the explainin' of it. It's an ould coal mine. Pat Driscoll, who lives down by the water-tank, tould me wonst that years back the railroad had run a tunnel back into the hill, an' used to run the coal out on small cars to the track. After a bit they quit workin' an' boarded up the end of the tunnel. An' I'm thinkin', Mrs. McQuaide, that's the fine cellar that ye have; it's at the end of the ould mine."

"But who was the thafe of the money?" interrupted Mrs. McQuaide.

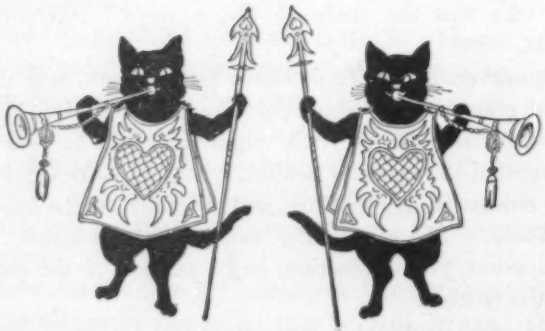
This, however, Mr. O'Toole could not explain, and after a few discursive remarks the whole party repaired to Mrs. McQuaide's cellar to investigate. A little vigorous effort in removing the boards revealed the opening behind, where Mrs. McQuaide had so carefully concealed her treasure, and also verified the statement of Mr. O'Toole. There was the tunnel, sure enough, with the timber supports yet in position, and a portion of the car track in place at the bottom.

As the party stood looking into the tunnel, there emerged from the darkness a small figure whose wide blue eyes viewed them with innocent wonder, and whose small hands were hidden behind his back. It was the Halliday baby! For a moment the surprise was so great that its mother almost fainted, while Mrs. O'Toole

and Mrs. McDermott piously crossed themselves. Not so with Mrs. McQuaide. Seized by a sudden inspiration, she rushed forward and caught up the child in her arms.

"The saints be praised!" she exclaimed. "This be the thafe that's got the money, I can't know. Look at his hands!"

Sure enough, the little pink fists were clapsed tightly about some silver coins, and upon going into the tunnel Mr. O'Toole soon found, a short distance away, a small opening to the surface above. At some time the baby had discovered this opening, which was in a thick clump of blackberry bushes near his mother's door, and through it he had made his frequent disappearances, returning thence laden with treasure. Thus the mystery of the robbery and the silver dollars was explained, and in spite of Father Murphy's refusal of a "charm," peace was restored to Nineveh, and the spell lifted from Tim Halliday's baby.



Ezra Collingford's Figure 4 Trap.*

BY WILLIAM MAYNADIER BROWNE.

IMAGINE a diffident, silent, spare, but well-built and erect little white-haired, white-bearded man of, say, sixty — a man with those easily interested and trustful eyes you sometimes meet in a child's gaze (his were china blue) — with that absolute modesty you sometimes find in a wise, uncomely girl — with that complete distrustfulness of self you sometimes see in an ungainly, thoughtful, clever country boy, — imagine these qualities combined in a little elderly man who had captained sailing vessels for nearly two score of years, and had never lost a ship; then you may form a picture, in your mind's eye, of Capt. Ezra Collingford, of Machias, Me.

Now imagine Captain Ezra's exact physical opposite. Then you may easily see Capt. Lester Hawks, roughly but firmly knit, lantern jawed and cold eyed. If Capt. Lester Hawks had anything to say, he never hesitated to say it, and to say it in such words as allowed of no misunderstanding. He was as sure of himself as he was of the polar needle. Yet for years he had been sailing under Capt. Ezra Collingford as first mate, though he had previously sailed as captain and was entitled to the prefix. The two were the closest of friends. I, as a boy in Machias, knew them both, for they were old friends of my father's while he was alive. He, too, was a seafaring man.

To me, as a boy, Captain Ezra, small as he was, was an object of reverence and awe. Nobody could make such neat, fascinating, perfectly delightful things with tools; nobody had such wonderful deftness in the use of the jack-knife as Captain Ezra had; and part and parcel of the sea though he was, he knew more about making and setting traps than anybody who spent his life ashore.

* This story received a fifth prize, of $100, in THE BLACK CAT prize competition, which closed March 31, 1897.

I liked the woods more than I did the sea. Many was the time the captain would, while on some "spell ashore," wander inland with me, and show me what he called his "idee of riggin' a trap." I shall never forget the deftness, the neatness, and the sureness with which he made for me the best figure 4 trap I have ever seen; and the delight of the day when he took me up to his own little private den where he slept, in his neat house, will remain with me as long as I live. He was a widower, with one child, a girl about my own age, cared for and brought up, during his trips at sea, by his unmarried sister who lived with him. But the charm of that room of his! On neat shelves and quaint brackets of his own making, ranged about the walls, were models of boats of all conceivable rigs, complete to the smallest detail, and each so beautiful in its completeness that I looked and looked in speechless wonder. Then he showed me, on the wall near the head of his bed, a miniature arrow; and while I was looking it veered slightly, as it pointed midway between the S and W of the dial behind it.

"It's rigged onto the vane on the roof," he said. "It's sort of foolishness," he added, with a chuckle, as I stood wrapt in admiration. Then my keen boy's eyes caught sight of a puzzling contrivance directly over a bracket lamp not far from the arrow.

"What's that for, captain?" I asked.

"Well, George," he answered, "sometimes I kinder read in bed, and that there's a rig I fixed so's to put out the lamp 'thout tumblin' out. They tell me 't's sorter bad to read in bed; but I dunno. Here, I'll show you." He lighted the kerosene lamp, reached behind the head of his small wooden bedstead, and pulled a string that was, unseen by me, hanging there. It was all done quickly and quietly. As he pulled the string a small, fan-shaped piece of leather attached to the end of a slender wooden arm descended exactly, and with just the right amount of force, upon the open top of the lamp chimney, then sprang back into its former position. The flame in the lamp went out. I exclaimed, "Captain, that's great!" He caught me by the arm, not roughly at all, and shook me a little.

"I believe you've got 's great a love for putterin' 's I have," he said, and laughed aloud.

When I was nearly grown I went to Boston to work in a store. Why or how it happened is no part of this story, but before long I found myself a member of the force of detective police, and at the time of which I write had risen to be a Sergeant of Division.

One day when, to kill time, I was reading every word of the morning's newspaper, I came across in the shipping news a line or so stating that the three-master, *Sarah L. Tillotson*, of Machias, Me., — Collingford, captain,— had earned quite a sum, as salvage, for towing a big Australian freighter, disabled by bad weather, into Rio Janeiro; and that this same *Sarah L. Tillotson* had passed Boston Light the afternoon before, bound for Boston. At this moment the office messenger entered my room.

"There are two men outside want to see you, sir."

"Who are they?" I asked.

"They didn't give their names; said you'd know them, sir."

"What do they look like?"

"Well, sir," the messenger answered, with the beginning of a smile in the corners of his mouth, "they look like the long and short of it, just ashore from a voyage."

"Show them in," I said, and was quite prepared to see, as I did, my father's old friends enter a moment later.

"How d'ye do?" said Captain Ezra shyly.

"Well, my son, how be ye?" said Captain Lester in his inflexible, resonant voice. He had always addressed me as "my son," as he invariably did any younger man whom he liked. If he didn't like him he used no form of address whatever; simply looked him in the eye, and spoke. He rarely called anybody by name. I had heard him occasionally address Captain Ezra as "Collie," but it was in moments of great earnestness, or of as near an approach to hilarity as Captain Lester ever allowed himself.

We shook hands. As often happens in the case of a big man, Captain Lester gave no responsive grip whatever. His hand in mine felt like a big leather glove that had dried hard after a thorough wetting and had been stuffed with sand. Captain Ezra, on the contrary, gave me a quick, warm, firm pressure of the hand. The upshot of it all was that they took supper with me that evening at a cozy restaurant I used to frequent; and over a glass

or two of rum and water, with just a touch of molasses, told me all about themselves and their plans.

"So, my son," said Captain Lester finally, slowly stirring his drink, "you see how 'tis. It's a matter of five thousand apiece for Collie and me — and what's more, we've got the money, the bills, all safe and tight," and here he let his big, hard hand fall upon my knee, and gripped and shook it gently. "Ain't that so, Collie?"

"Ee-us," said Captain Ezra for reply, quietly, with a slow, acquiescing nod of the head.

"Well, what are you going to do now?" I asked.

"That's jest it. You listen," said Captain Lester.

I listened.

"He's," — with a jerk of his big thumb toward Captain Ezra, — "goin' to write out to Estella in Denver, and if everything's fit, he's going out there for a spell to stay 'long o' her and her husband and the children."

I must mention here that, much to Captain Ezra's delight, his daughter Estella had, some years before, married a young city man, who, having come into Machias aboard a hired yacht, had met, fallen in love with, proposed to, and been accepted by his daughter. Arthur Crane his name was, and the good little captain had always cherished a certain amount of pride because Estella was married to a "financial" man; for Crane had some years before gone to Denver to become cashier of a bank, which his employer, at that time, started there.

"Children?" I asked. "I thought there was only one."

Captain Ezra held up two fingers, and smiled and nodded. Something about him, I can't tell you what, conveyed the idea, too, that the children would have money in the bank some day.

"Yes, sir," continued Captain Lester, "*he's* a-goin' out to Denver to see 'em," — with another jerk of his thumb toward Captain Ezra; accomplished this time by merely turning over his big hand, which now lay, gnarled and brown, before him on the table, — "but afore that, he wants to have his fling." Here Captain Lester turned and slowly winked at Captain Ezra, and Captain Ezra smiled as he passed the back of his hand across his shaven upper lip. "Yes, sir, wants to spend two, three weeks

here in Boston, lookin' round, *and* eatin' at hotels. That it?" Captain Ezra nodded. "Then go to Denver; then back to port and take the *Sarah L.* agin." Captain Lester leaned back in his chair and gazed at me sternly, as if I were a questionable sky.

"Who's going to sail the *Sarah L.* in the meantime?" I asked.

"I be," replied Captain Lester, and spat neatly. "Seen the owner this mornin'; signed; Floridy; lumber. Month, or thereabouts, maybe. Consigned here to Boston. Then *he* takes her agin', same's afore. All understood, fair *and* above board."

"I see," I said.

"Now, my son," said Captain Lester, leaning forward, his elbows on the table, "I want you to look after *him*. He wants a snug place to bunk — not meals — he's callatin' to get *them* at hotels. He wants a place where the money he has with him won't be in no danger whatsoever."

"The money?" I exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, my son, the money," Captain Lester repeated. "His'n and mine. He's got both stowed away in his clothes." Captain Lester leaned back in his chair and stared at me hard, after having thrust his hands deep into his trousers' pockets. He rocked slowly back and forth on the hind legs of his chair.

"Why don't you deposit it?" I asked in amazement. He shook his head. I argued. Captain Lester turned as smoothly from every argument I advanced as the rudder post of the *Sarah L.* turned in response to the pressure of his big hand upon the wheel; but he was, after all was said, as inflexible in his mental direction as the rudder post was in its mechanical limits.

"No, my son," he said at last, "I don't know no bank near's well's I do Collie."

"But what do you intend to do with this money when you come back?" I asked.

"Build a coaster, be n't we?" he said, glancing at Captain Ezra.

"Well, I guess," said Captain Ezra, with the nearest approach to assurance I had ever seen in him.

"Call her *Estella C.*, too," said Captain Lester; and again he spat unobtrusively.

"'F you say so," said Captain Ezra bashfully.

"Well, I *do* say so," replied Captain Lester, as if he were ready and anxious to do battle for his choice.

Meanwhile, I had been thinking. A friend of mine, Jack Fitzgerald, a young lawyer, had a room at the West End — never mind what street it was on — call it North Perry Street. It was in one of the houses that used to be the mansions of the Boston merchants years ago. Low studded and wainscoted (simply wainscoted with broad, smooth, painted panels), but sunny, and in a quiet, decent neighborhood — one of those forgotten neighborhoods that, when you visit them, make you say to yourself, as you stand and dream about it: "St! st! st! Why in the world did they leave this to build on "— But it's no matter. It was a lovely old house and a lovable old room. Jack was away —was out West for two months on business; and though his room was vacant, he still retained it.

That night the captains slept aboard the *Sarah L.*, but the next day I received a telegram from Jack in reply to a half-rate one of mine sent the night before, which read: —

May old friend of mine use your room two weeks?

Jack's answer was like him, himself — short, sharp, and satisfactory. All it said was: —

Sure. Jack.

In due time I "stowed away," to use his own expression, Captain Ezra, together with his tin cash box, in Jack's room; and Captain Lester sailed South for his cargo of lumber. Then I let the little captain alone for a few days — to have his fling.

At length I called upon him to see how he was getting along, and how he stood "eatin' at hotels." I found him in, but — mercy! what a change! Instead of my clear-eyed, child-like, gentle Captain Ezra, I found a pale, haggard, bent, and, what was far worse, mumbling old man. I threw my arm about him, and begged him to tell me what was the trouble. For a moment he seemed like himself. He patted me on the shoulder, shook me by the hand, laughed — or tried to — and said he was "jus' 's well 's ever he was." But the next moment he became again the wreck I had found him. With the utmost gentleness, I tried

to question him, but all to no purpose. He always came back to the same reply: "Jus' 's well 's ever I was, George; don't you worry." The pitiful attempt at a laugh that always followed my expressions of anxiety brought my heart into my mouth; and the look in his eyes, part terror, part sadness, all despair, pierced it like a knife.

Instinctively I glanced about the room. It was the same as when Jack left it, the night I saw him off, except that here and there, in places where it could be done without disturbing Jack's belongings, the captain had put things of his own — sea things, curiosities, queer relics of voyages. For instance, on the low, narrow mantel-shelf that ran along above the old-fashioned, broad, open fireplace I noticed, in spaces hitherto unused, a bronze Japanese figure; an East Indian idol, in miniature; and so on, in various spots about the room, though not in many. Evidently Captain Ezra had tried to make the room homelike, but, as ever, had been careful not to interfere. I noticed, too, his tin cash box under the head of the bed. It occurred to me that here might lie the trouble; but, no — he assured me, with the first semblance of real alertness he had shown, that it was safe and sound. Indeed, he now became, for him, positive and insistent, even more so than was necessary, that the cash box and its contents were all right. Finally, I gave it up, decided to come over again the next day, and took my leave.

The next day I called. He was out. I called again and again. He was always out, and the door of his room was always locked. Then I questioned the landlady, whom I knew to be a reliable woman. But, really, he was such a quiet little man, and made so little trouble, she hadn't noticed ;— except that once he had asked her if there were a hardware store handy, and that when he came back, after having gone out for an hour or so, he was carrying a heavy bundle.

At last I found him in once more. It was several days later, and again I was surprised at the change in his appearance. He was not *my* Captain Ezra, to be sure, but he was nearer to it. He seemed more alive, less dejected, and, what I by force of habit, I suppose, especially noted, less haunted by fear. But there was an eagerness, an alertness, a restlessness about him I did not like.

This time I took a new tack. I asked him what he had heard from his daughter. To this he replied, with even added eagerness, that she was "first rate — first rate 's she could be." I asked him when he expected to go to her. He looked anywhere but at me — so unlike him! — and went back to the mumbling. At length the mumbling resolved itself into coherence, and I distinguished words. "Long journey; sort o' thought I'd wait till Lester reached port. Stay ashore spell longer, mebbe." All of which ended in a laugh intended to convey the impression of nonchalance, and failing utterly to do so. But now his manner changed with marked suddenness. He became almost keen.

"You're a detective?" he asked.

"Of course," I replied, for I knew he knew it.

"Well, you read that," he said, and thrust a letter at me. It was printed in pen and ink, on ordinary stationery such as you might buy at a corner thread-and-needle shop. I read these words: —

Captain: We know you got the money — yours and his'n. Meet us on Portland Street at 9 P. M., on the fifteenth, and give it up, or you will be a dead man next day.

There was no signature. At last I knew. My poor old Captain Ezra was slowly but surely being frightened to death. I laughed aloud in my joy, for I knew that if any man could protect and comfort him, I could. I soothed and reassured him.

I asked him for the envelope, but unfortunately he had destroyed it. We sat late into the night discussing a plan of my suggestion. The fifteenth was two days ahead, and Captain Ezra finally agreed, in response to my request, to walk the length of Portland Street at 10 P. M. on that night. Of course I meant to have my men carefully stationed. Throughout our talk he was much more like himself, and, with a weight off my mind, I left him. I was sure of my ground now.

I called again the next day to again reassure him. He had received another letter, printed like the first, and on the same kind of paper. It said only this: —

Remember. If you don't, you're a dead man on the 16th.

Again there was no signature, but this time he had preserved

the envelope. The letter had been mailed in South Boston. But the time was too short to watch mail boxes, so this information was, to a degree, immaterial.

Once more I sat with Captain Ezra and talked over the plan. Everything was arranged, and he agreed to every arrangement. He was like, yet strangely unlike himself.

"I see by this morning's paper," he said abruptly, "that the *Sarah L.* was off Hatteras yesterday, bound home. Lester'll be here on the sixteenth."

I was glad of that, and told him so. When I left him, he was almost like himself in every way.

The night of the fifteenth was warm and clear, with a full moon shining. "Hard on our friends, the murderers," I thought to myself, as the captain and I walked to his rendezvous. We carried out our program to the letter. Captain Ezra walked Portland Street from end to end, apparently alone, but always guarded, and — not a soul did he meet.

Evidently our quarry had smelled a rat and had taken flight. As I walked back to the room with the captain, we talked the matter over, and decided to await developments. He agreed that it would be best to stay in his room the next day, the sixteenth, and I assured him that the house would be carefully guarded. As I left him at the door, I laughed off the whole affair. When I bade him "good night," he held out his hand and said — in the same old quiet, bashful way I had always until recently known: —

"Well, good night, George; I know you'll take care o' me, you and Lester. Somehow I sorter feel's if it *might* happen, though, to-morrow."

I again reassured him, and after seeing him safely indoors went home. He didn't know it, but two of my men were at that moment on the watch, and remained so all that night.

The next morning I was on the ground again. Nothing whatever had happened, my men told me. As I was talking with them I felt a weight on my shoulder. I turned and found the explanation. The weight was Captain Lester's hand, and I heard his level voice saying, "Well, my son, how be ye?" He had made the wharf early that morning, and had come directly to his

old friend. We entered the house together and went to Captain Ezra's door. I knocked. No answer.

"Guess that hotel eatin' makes him sleepy," said Captain Lester. "Give me a turn," and he knocked three times with his great brine-hardened knuckles. It was enough to wake the dead, — and, God help us! that was what was needed.

The door was not locked. We went in. The bright, warm sunlight was streaming into the room, and little Captain Ezra was sitting peacefully in the armchair near the corner of the open fireplace. I saw at a glance the small, round, dark blue spot in the center of his forehead. Captain Lester reached the chair first. Then I heard what I pray I may never hear again — the sounds of a great, big, simple heart in abject grief. He knelt by Captain Ezra, and fondled the hand resting on the arm of the chair. The other was hanging limp.

"Collie! Son! 'Taint true! Say it ain't true! O Christ!" and he bowed his head and sobbed aloud. I waited. Then I touched him on the shoulder.

"Captain," I said, "this is murder." He was on his feet in an instant.

"Murder!" he whispered, looking at me. "Murder!" His voice was now like low, distant thunder. He turned, and for the first time saw the bullet hole in Captain Ezra's forehead. "By the eternal God, who done it?" These words came from him as if they were the last gasp from some overtaxed, exhausted, mighty engine. He looked a giant as he stood there, his arms at his sides, but each bent inward, and his great fists clenched. "Who done it, I say?" he repeated, but this time with a snarl like a tortured lion's.

"That we must find out," I said, as gently as I could. "We must be calm, first of all, and see what we can find."

"Right, my son," he groaned. "I'm calm now," — and he was: but his face! — it was scarred by awful grief already.

"The cash box! See!" I exclaimed. We hurried to the bed together. Near it lay the box, open and empty, save for one single paper, a letter. I started to take it from the box, but Lester Hawks was quicker than I. In an instant he had it and read the address. I had read it, too. It was addressed to him.

He turned to me and said three words:

"You set down." I sat down. Standing where he was, he opened the letter and read. There was an enclosure. He read that, too. As he read, he breathed hard, through his teeth, and sobbed. While he was reading I had time to collect my thoughts, and started to my feet to call my men, from the window. Again came the three words, and — I sat down.

At last he raised his gaunt head from the papers. He walked to the armchair and passed round it to the side next the fireplace, looking at the floor. He stooped and pointed at what I had not, in my distress, noticed before. Beneath the limp arm that hung down lay a piece of white twine, on the floor, in many S's, L's, and O's, as if it had been jerked there. Then he stared at me, a long, agonized, hopeless stare. At last he spoke, and all he said was, "You keep settin' down." He looked closely at the old-fashioned carving that formed the outer edge of the mantelpiece itself. Next he looked at his dead friend, and sighed.

Then he went to the further side of the fireplace and felt carefully along the molding bordering a large panel that evidently to me, knowing, as I did, these old houses, covered some unused space beside the chimney breast. His examination was short. He gave me a look as he finished, and his look plainly repeated his last four words. He went quickly to the closet near the bed, returning immediately carrying a few simple tools. I saw they were new. Quickly and neatly his bulky hands did his bidding; moldings, boards, finally the panel itself came off, and all almost without a sound. He was between me and what he was doing. He spoke over his shoulder.

"Lock that door." I did it. "Look here." I came to his side and looked into the opening.

"See?" he said. His voice was deep and quiet. I saw it all at a glance. In the pattern of the carving were recurrent, deep, circular depressions; one of these had been bored through, forming a hole which led into the space behind the panel. Pointing through this hole, with fatal accuracy, was a revolver, lashed in place with infinite neatness. For the rest, I saw nothing but a heavy iron weight, a few slender sticks notched as for a figure 4 trap, and a piece of string — all lying together on the floor at the bottom of the space behind the panel. This was all I saw, but I *knew*.

"Set down," said Captain Lester. As I did so, he drew toward him a chair and sat down, himself, exactly facing me. "Now you listen."

He took from his pocket, where he had carefully placed them, the papers we found in the box.

"This is from *him*," he said, "to me. But I'll read it to *you*." Then he read as follows: —

Lester: I ain't been murdered. I done it myself. I've stole your money and don't dare to face you. Before reading further please read the letter from Estella, enclosed herein.

Here he opened and read the enclosure: —

Dear Father: We are in fearful trouble, and I write to you for help. Don't blame Arthur. He has always been a good husband to me, and I love him dearly. He has taken money from the bank to speculate with, and O father, I know it will kill you with grief! we've got to have $10,000 at once, or Arthur will have to go to jail. Think of me and the children, father dear, and help us if you can.

ESTELLA.

Without comment Captain Lester returned to the letter from his friend: —

Now, Lester, you know why I done it. My last wish is that she should always think I been murdered. If she should find out I done just what her husband did, it would break her heart. She's all right now. I sent her your money and mine. If you can find it in your heart to do what I ask, you will much oblige

EZRA COLLINGFORD.

When Captain Lester had finished reading, he carefully refolded the papers and put them back in his pocket. Then he turned to me.

"You stand up," he said, as he arose himself. I stood. He placed a hand on each of my shoulders. I felt his grip *then*, I can feel it still. "My son," he said, looking down into my eyes, "there's just two men knows about this. Just 's soon 's any more knows it, one o' them two has got to die, if I have to kill him. What do you say?" For answer I held out my hand. Wouldn't you have? He threw his arms around me, and we cried like children.

Then we quietly destroyed all evidence of suicide, and replaced the panel and molding. This finished, I glanced hurriedly through the writing desk. I didn't find much, merely a piece of

blotting paper upon which some hand-printed letters, reversed, were visible. I could easily make out E A D M A N. In a drawer I found, also, a few sheets of paper like that used in the captain's letters. Then I went out and gave my men instructions in regard to Capt. Ezra Collingford's murder.

. . . . . .

Captain Lester went down with the *Sarah L.* in the great gale of '93. Both Estella and her husband are dead. Otherwise I should not have told this tale.

Decorative Dainties.

THAT it is not merely what we eat, but the enjoyment of what we eat, that nourishes, every thinking house mother should know. But how to make food not merely wholesome but attractive to both the eye and palate — that is a problem that demands altogether too much of the time, energy, and money of the modern housekeeper.

At one time France held the only key to this problem, and French cooks, or at any rate French flavors, colorings, and condiments have been imported at a large expense for the tables of the wealthy.

Now, however, the ability to combine eye-pleasing and palate-tickling effects in wholesome food, and at slight expense, has been opened up to the whole army of ambitious housewives by the long-established firm of the Joseph Burnett Co. From them or their agents can be obtained not merely their already standard flavorings and essences, but the pistachio flavor of Oriental sweetmeats, the distilled waters of the French rose and orange flower, and the exquisite coloring pastes by whose use a uniform tint can be imparted to food as well as to table decorations. As these pastes come in such attractive shades as fruit red, golden yellow, leaf green, caramel, damask rose, and violet, the rose tints of a pink tea can easily be carried out in cakes and bonbons, as well as in flowers and candle shades; while a green and white dinner for a hot day may carry a sensation of coolness to the eye as well as the palate through the matching of the tints of maiden hair and green and white glass and china, with sauces colored with Burnett's harmless leaf green, and ices flavored with that firm's delicious pistachio extract.

Besides the articles already named, this house, which has been a public benefactor for the last fifty years, still manufactures its unequaled flavorings, as well as its more recently produced but equally reliable toilet articles, flower perfumes, etc., etc. To introduce these to an even wider circle, the firm has published an exquisite booklet of selected suggestions, ranging from the care of a house and "what to have for dessert," to a poetical language of flowers and advice concerning the toilet, fine points of table etiquette, etc. From this book and the endorsements it contains, given by leading chefs, cooking teachers, etc., of the Joseph Burnett Co.'s specialties, the most experienced housewife can receive hundreds of helpful hints, while by its use in ordering her kitchen or toilet supplies, she may feel confident that she is buying pure, wholesome goods, instead of the cheap adulterated articles that the hard times have caused many dealers to put upon the market. Usually this attractive booklet is sold for fifty cents, but to any reader of THE BLACK CAT, who will send address to the Joseph Burnett Co., India Street, Boston, Mass., it will be forwarded free of charge, postpaid.

Thi

Copyrigh

T

No 24 C

Decorative Dainties.

HAT it is not merely what we eat, but the enjoyment of what we eat, that nourishes, every thinking house mother should know. But how to make food not merely wholesome but attractive to both the eye and palate — that is a problem that demands altogether too much of the time, energy, and money of the modern housekeeper.

At one time France held the only key to this problem, and French cooks, or at any rate French flavors, colorings, and condiments have been imported at a large expense for the tables of the wealthy.

Now, however, the ability to combine eye-pleasing and palate-tickling effects in wholesome food, and at slight expense, has been opened up to the whole army of ambitious housewives by the long-established firm of the Joseph Burnett Co. From them or their agents can be obtained not merely their already standard flavorings and essences, but the pistachio flavor of Oriental sweetmeats, the distilled waters of the French rose and orange flower, and the exquisite coloring pastes by whose use a uniform tint can be imparted to food as well as to table decorations. As these pastes come in such attractive shades as fruit red, golden yellow, leaf green, caramel, damask rose, and violet, the rose tints of a pink tea can easily be carried out in cakes and bonbons, as well as in flowers and candle shades; while a green and white dinner for a hot day may carry a sensation of coolness to the eye as well as the palate through the matching of the tints of maiden hair and green and white glass and china, with sauces colored with Burnett's harmless leaf green, and ices flavored with that firm's delicious pistachio extract.

Besides the articles already named, this house, which has been a public benefactor for the last fifty years, still manufactures its unequaled flavorings, as well as its more recently produced but equally reliable toilet articles, flower perfumes, etc., etc. To introduce these to an even wider circle, the firm has published an exquisite booklet of selected suggestions, ranging from the care of a house and "what to have for dessert," to a poetical language of flowers and advice concerning the toilet, fine points of table etiquette, etc. From this book and the endorsements it contains, given by leading chefs, cooking teachers, etc., of the Joseph Burnett Co.'s specialties, the most experienced housewife can receive hundreds of helpful hints, while by its use in ordering her kitchen or toilet supplies, she may feel confident that she is buying pure, wholesome goods, instead of the cheap adulterated articles that the hard times have caused many dealers to put upon the market. Usually this attractive booklet is sold for fifty cents, but to any reader of THE BLACK CAT, who will send address to the Joseph Burnett Co., India Street, Boston, Mass., it will be forwarded free of charge, postpaid.

Thi
Copyrigh
T
No 24 C